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The Playground

Sunday Play



Photo by L. W. Hine

AN ACTIVE CHILD FINDS REST IN PLAY

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The Playground

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PURPOSE:

To promote normal wholesome play and public recreation

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SUNDAY PLAY.*

JOSEPH LEE,

Boston, Mass.

President Playground Association of America

I believe our Sunday laws forbidding play and sport are in the main an evil. I believe that they do much harm and prevent a great deal of good. I believe that games and play on Sunday, under proper restrictions as to time, place and noise, should be not only permitted but encouraged. I believe that the provision in our game laws forbidding fishing and shooting on Sunday is wrong. It is a rich man's law. It would be better to forbid these forms of sport on any day except Sunday, so as to reserve the game for the one day in the week when the average citizen can go after it.

That Sunday is to a great extent, for city children at least, a day of lawlessness and demoralization cannot, I think, be successfully disputed. There are, so far as I am aware, no statistics upon the point, but I have gathered a considerable amount of testimony from social workers to the effect that Sunday is at present the especial day for the planning and carrying out of mischief and law-breaking in various forms, and that in particular it is, among city boys, very largely devoted to gambling. Whatever the explanation may be, Sunday is as a matter of fact, for great numbers, if not for the majority of our children, a radiating center of evil tendencies for the entire week.

And that Sunday should have a demoralizing effect would seem to be the inevitable result of our present Sunday laws. If its influence were not in great measure an evil one it would not be for the omission on our part of the sort of measure best calculated to make it so. We rightly prohibit work on Sunday so far as practicable. Our laws to that effect are essential to the existence of Sunday and constitute a most beneficent piece of legislation. But by forbidding play also, we have done our best to make the day, for our young people at least, a day of idleness; and the distinction between enjoining idleness and promoting evil is one hardly worth insisting on.

It is true that we do permit some forms of play.

* Address delivered at Fourth Annual Congress of the Playground Association of America, June 9, 1910.

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Reading, gossip, paying visits, are lawful, as are also riding, yachting, automobiling and aviation. Walking also is permitted; but so far as games suited to young people and not requiring an independent fortune are concerned, we make our prohibition fairly general.

It is true, also, that we foster and support the church; and going to church represents for many, even of our young people, a most valuable part of what Sunday means and ought to mean. But we cannot spend all the waking hours in church, even if the hours we spend there are all waking hours. When church is over, there is still a long day left to be filled up, and sedentary pursuits would never wholly fill it for the young. It would seem as though we had entered into a certain sort of partnership, more common during the middle ages than it is to-day,—our contribution being to find the idle hands while the party of the other part, a reputed expert in that line, agrees to do the rest.

You know what happens when you make a dam across a brook. It backs up onto people's lawns and orchards, floods their cellars, carries off their apples and other movable possessions, tears their shrubs and flowers, and drowns their hens. In short, it trespasses generally on their property and their good nature, to the detriment of both. Whose fault is it in that case that these depredations occur? Who is in reality the creator of such area of devastation? In the analogous case now under consideration we have hitherto blamed the brook. I think it is time that we traced the evil a little nearer home.

Our present Sunday laws are like that unwise sort of factory legislation which forbids children to work without requiring them to go to school; except that our Sunday legislation goes a step further in forbidding play as well. It thus holds the first place as an example of legislation enjoining idleness and producing crime.

What has got us into this position is the fact that our Sunday laws are a survival, a shell left on the sea shore, from which the living creature has departed, the negative side of an institution that no longer lives. The Puritan Sunday law was a positive, not a negative, enactment. The Sunday it prescribed was not a day of idleness but of observance. Going to church was mandatory, and church was carried on for several hours twice during the day. It must have been a torture to the young people, but at least it

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occupied them instead of merely cutting off all natural occupation and, except for an hour in the morning, leaving nothing in its place. We retain the restrictions after the conception of the Sabbath for which they stood has been abandoned. The fortress has become a prison. What was once armor against Satan and his wiles survives as an incumbrance that delivers us more helpless into his hands. It is as though we went down to business each morning rigged out in the breast plate and buff coat of some Puritan ancestor, carrying a flintlock along with us by way of walking stick, merely because these accessories were once useful as protection against Indian attacks.

There is already evidence of a practical and increasing recognition of the true cause of Sunday lawlessness. In New York the park board has opened Central Park for tennis and baseball on Sunday afternoons. Similar Sunday opportunities are furnished in Chicago and elsewhere. In Boston we have learned to permit certain kinds of sport such as swimming, skating and tobogganing (not all at the same time of year); but anything in which a ball is used is still anathema. I believe that such exceptions to our Sunday law will grow until our whole public provision in the matter of Sunday play has been radically modified, and that the sooner such a change is brought about the better will it be for us. Exactly what modification should be made is a matter that must be worked out by experience and that will always be dealt with somewhat differently in different communities. In general, I believe that all kinds of games and sports that are permissible at any time, including ball games, should be allowed on Sunday, under proper restrictions as to time, place and noise. I do not believe that such modification will take from Sunday any of the attributes that have endeared it to us and that make it one of the most important of our institutions. On the contrary it is in the interest of Sunday, of its fuller realization, that we shall remove the fetters we have placed upon it.

But the great evil of our Sunday laws is not in the harm they do but in the good that they prevent. Their great sin is against Sunday itself. Their revision is called for not merely because they have pushed poor human nature to the wall and forced it into lawbreaking in self-defence, but more especially because they have

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deprived this most beneficent institution of half its proper service to mankind.

What we need first of all to understand in looking at this question is that a day of idleness is not a day of rest. Our Sunday laws in prescribing idleness do not safeguard the Sabbath; they forbid its true observance. Rest for the young, for the healthy of any age, for anybody who is still in any sense alive, does not consist exclusively in lying down. What rests a man is not the attempt to stop the machinery of life, but the turning of the vital force into refreshing channels. The inevitably futile attempt to do nothing has the same effect on the human mechanism that is produced on a steamboat in a head sea when the screw comes out of water. The machine keeps on whirling just the same, only it racks the ship instead of sending her ahead. A boy will be more tired at the end of a day spent in idling about than after ten hours of some vigorous pursuit in the open air. We cannot too deeply take to heart the fact that for the human spirit loafing is not repose, but a source of fatigue and even of disease. Enforcement of Sunday idleness is, for a great proportion of the community at least, including all of the healthy young, the prohibition of Sunday rest.

And Sunday is not for rest alone. Its true service is a positive, not a negative one. It is not like the night, simply for sleep—a blank space between one working period and another. It is, on the contrary, a time set apart for the most important action of the week. It should be our fullest day and not our emptiest.

The churches have been right in this; and they have themselves supplied what is to most people an essential part of the re-creative experience for which Sunday stands. No Sunday legislation will be wise or adequate which fails to give them its protection and support. Church services should, for instance, be protected against the making of unnecessary noise in their neighborhood.

But Sunday is older than the church, and its purposes are wider than those that the church fulfills. The month and its division into weeks, if Darwin's hypothesis is correct, is older than man himself. Stamped in the physiology of all the mammals, and dating back to the time when the lives of our amphibious ancestors were governed by the period of the spring tides, the ancient sovereignty of the week seemingly justifies a generalization of Falstaff's sagacious boast that we are ruled as the tide is by our

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noble and chaste mistress the moon. At all events, whatever its physiological or historical foundation, the need of Sunday lies deep in human nature and would still be there even if there were no church, and has other expressions than church going, important as that is.

There is, however, another use of Sunday, analagous to church going and usually a part of it; namely, recollection, in the sense of the Italian word *racogliamento*, the re-collection or re-assembling of the soul. In every stream there should be now and then a pool in which the hurry and the noise ceases and we can see into the depths. Sunday is the day to allow the dust to settle and look around, to pull ourselves together, observe our bearings on our more universal relations, note the variations of the compass, and lay out our course anew. Such a periodic re-assembling is necessary to the integrity and permanence of life, to the cumulative value of character. And for this purpose as well as for church going, wanton and unnecessary noise on the Sunday should be suppressed. Match games, for instance, at which crowds are permitted to assemble, should be relegated, so far as feasible, to the remoter portions of the town.

But not even for the spiritual advantages of Sunday quiet must sounds incidental to other and positive uses of the day be too strictly suppressed. People must still be allowed to play the organ and to sing hymns, even though it disturbs your meditation, and the same is true of other useful and profitable observances.

Another use of Sunday is as family day. It is the day on which the father is at home, the day for playing the new piece on the piano, for singing hymns and songs, seeing the baby's new tooth and making the old man himself show what he can do in reading aloud, or any other stunts he thinks he knows. It is the day for going to the beach, country excursions and trolley rides, for visiting museums and parks. I believe it should be a condition on violation of which the charter of any well-mounted museum or library should be forfeited, that it should be open on Sunday afternoons.

In this connection the question of professional baseball and other public entertainments might logically be discussed. But these form a separate question and one apart from my present subject. In general my own belief is that professional entertainments, including baseball, involving as they do Sunday work, should

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be prohibited except where, as in the case of municipal concerts, they are incidental to the use of some park or other desirable place of public recreation and enhance its value.

But besides rest, religion and recreation—the three R's of sabbatarian observance—and its use as family day, Sunday fulfills another more essential service, a service which embodies, indeed, the aboriginal and inclusive purpose for the sake of which such an institution exists. Sunday is the day of compensation, the day of fulfilment to those essential purposes of life for which the weekday has left no room. It is the day for completing the pattern, for weaving into the texture of our lives those main strands of being which would otherwise be left out, and without which we are not quite alive.

A young man has spent the week bending over the columns of a ledger. A young woman has passed the working days standing at a machine making a few simple motions of the hand. The golden hours of strength and youth, the morning hours in which the vital current is at its height, which mould life and destiny in their image according to the use we make of them, have gone in such employments as these. Obviously some special provision must be made, some compensatory activity supplied, if life worthy of the name is to be preserved for these. The same is true of many lives of workers in our mills and factories. It is true to some extent of any life under the system of industrial specialization. For hardly any employment is so broad and catholic, so pervious to the motions of the human spirit and so inclusive of them, as wholly to convey the soul of any man.

It is true that the greatest good fortune of our modern world lies perhaps in the fact that we have outlived the notion that useful work can be degrading. But it is time we came to recognize the truth that lay behind that superstition. It should be at least a sobering thought that the great majority of us are living, and that our young people are growing and taking form, under conditions that the vast majority of mankind have looked upon as involving a disgrace. Has a sentiment universally admitted until within a comparatively insignificant period of time been so devoid of truth as we now suppose? Is the Indian so wholly wrong when he refuses to surrender the free life of the plains to become the drudge of the factory and the dweller in a city tenement? Was the chivalric ideal of devotion to love and war so wholly mistaken that the

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life of a mill operative can be accepted as in all respects an advantageous substitute? Was the opinion of the ancient philosophers that virtue and industrial occupation were incompatible so far astray that we can accept industrial occupation of the narrower sort as morally sufficient in itself?

Specialization is a great industrial principle and a chief means of modern civilization. And specialization may be also a means of spiritual success where it enables a man to carry some one art to the point of mastery, so concentrating his power that he may break through at some one point into a higher circle of expression and of life. But even in such a case, where specialization is in some art capable of being the vehicle of the human spirit, there is need of supplementary activity. No man is quite all singer, sculptor, scientist. Even in the case of these, some overflow, some supplementary activity, is necessary. There is some observance still due to that part of the bounteous human nature in them that even their art could not convey.

But specialization as we see it in our modern industry is not specialization upon an art nor according to the laws of art. It is not even specialization upon a service, upon a whole achievement of any sort. It is specialization *within* the task, carried often to so extreme a point, leaving to each worker so minute a contribution to the result, that nothing of significance is left. It is like the division of a fabric into pieces so small that neither form nor color is any longer visible. There is nothing either in the sort of activity or in the relation to results produced that can become to any important degree a channel for the human soul.

A man, it is true, can so add up his column of figures that they shall become columns of strength and beauty in his life. He can so devote himself to any task as to make it an expression of moral worth. But he cannot through every task liberate the creative principle, utter the word that nature has intrusted to him. A man, if he has a hero's soul, can die heroically under any circumstances. But social conditions under which death and renunciation are the best opportunity offered cannot be considered a success. It is the business of society to offer to its members a way of life, not merely the liberty to die. As industrial civilization advances, and with it specialization becomes more extreme, the need of some other outlet, of some overflow for the part of human nature that industry leaves unexpressed, becomes intensified.

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The truth behind the ancient feeling that menial labor is degrading, behind our instinct that the life of the factory drudge is not a life, is that man power is not like steam power a mere matter of foot tons. Man's strength does not consist of simple undifferentiated capacity for muscular contraction or nervous effort. It is, on the contrary, a power in great part prescribed, committed, billeted to certain ends. It exists only toward its predestined tasks and withers or ceases altogether except as it finds a way to them.

Man is the creature of certain kinds of acts and exists only as he embodies them—a fact that can be verified by anyone who will watch a growing child. There the process of his construction is laid before the eyes of anyone who will take the trouble to observe. From the time when the baby finds his hands, wields his rattle or his spoon, you can trace the growth through achievement of the achieving animal, the self-creation of this creature who becomes himself through the doing of things that are to him significant. Through action are then visibly wound the main fibres of his being. You can see man the creator fashioning himself through the making of block houses and mud pies; man the nurturer, growing through the care of dolls and pets and plants; man the poet evolved in the rhythmic plays; man the scientist in plays of imitation, of collecting, dissecting, classifying; man the fighter, wrought in the hundred games of contest; man the hunter in the chasing games; and man the citizen through team play.

There in children's play you can see going on before your eyes, in a series of acts clear and unmistakable, the process that makes man what he is. And the essential point to observe is that, through all his life, it is by obedience to these constituting activities that first created him that he keeps himself alive.

Man is the incarnation of his leading instincts—not primarily of the mere appetites or hungers, which control the subordinate, physiological manifestations of his being, but more wholly and pervasively by the great forthputting instincts, the creative, the assertive, the instincts of achievement. In the deepest sense he *is* these instincts. They are the ultimate fact about him, giving his true form and law, constituting the final and irreducible substance of which he is composed. His body is their tool. His mind and heart are emanations of them. Man is a process. His law is a law of action. Matter passes through him as through a wave in a rapid. and takes the shape which the law of his action

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gives it, as it obeys the laws of gravitation and momentum in the wave. He is not the material but the law, or rather the fulfillment of it, and exists as he embodies it.

In proportion as he is a maker, a fighter, a hunter, a nurturer, an investigator, a citizen, an artist—achievement set to rhythm—the man is really there. Uninformed by these constituent purposes he is a scarecrow, a derelict, the left-off clothes of a soul that has abdicated. These purposes create the man in the play and apprenticeship of his long infancy. In maturity their fulfillment still constitutes his life. When they cease to operate, the flame goes out.

That life is in these master instincts is a fact not opposed to or inconsistent with morality. Whatever the governing or selecting principle may be—an instinct of instincts, pure reason, conscience, over-soul, however it may be named, the bearer of ultimate authority enforced by the power of life and death—the master instincts constitute the substance with which this selecting principle has to deal. They form the realm of which volition is the king.

Moreover, it is important to note that obedience to the achieving instincts is never self-indulgence but always self-surrender. Their prescription states itself ever in the form of an extra-personal ideal, inexorable, independent of the subject's will. The true fighter, artist, nurturer, citizen, is such through subordination to the impersonal end, often to the sacrifice of life itself.

Man as his active nature has thus created him finds himself to a great extent a stranger in the modern world. It is no longer the world for which nature designed him, to which his great constituent instincts accurately relate. It is no longer a world of war and hunting, and it is for many of its people becoming a world in which even the building creating instinct finds but a meagre satisfaction. Man the hunter, the nurturer, the creator, finds himself set down for the best hours of his day, during all the working years of life, to tasks so dessicated of all meaning, so barren of power to convey the expression of a human soul, that the soul is well-nigh starved out of him. That store of vital energy which should have gone to fighting him out a way of utterance has run to spiritual waste and left him dumb, imprisoned. This is the tragedy of civilization—that the end of all our labor and our sacrifice has been, for so many men and women, the defeat of that inner life which it was our whole object to preserve.

Mr. Roosevelt's insistence on the moral value of war or of

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the warlike virtues indicates a sound instinct for spiritual values. William James, in his search for peaceful substitutes for war, is a pioneer in a program of conservation of spiritual values in our industrial society that will before long constitute an essential feature of the policy of all progressive communities. But fighting is only one of the vital instincts left unfulfilled in modern industry. The cause of civilization is the substitution of processes that effectively secure a living for more ancient ones which, though less efficient to that end, had the inestimable virtue that they also expressed a life. The cure is, in part, to re-charge these processes with the power of expression

The deepest industrial problem of our time is not the problem of wages or even that of proper hygienic conditions, important as these are, but of so preparing the man for his employment, and modifying the employment to fit the man, that the process of gaining a livelihood shall no longer be, in so large a proportion of instances, a denial of the possibility of life itself.

Such is our weekday problem—as Ruskin so well saw and said—to find the artist in the artisan, to restore man the creator in the present slave to the making of useful things. Our Sunday problem is supplementary—to find room for that part of each man's life which his daily industry has shown itself unable to contain.

And this problem is not a hopeless one. If civilization has for a great proportion of mankind sterilized the working day, it has provided compensation in its enhancement of the possibilities of leisure. What it has taken from industry it has more than given back in art. Music, poetry and literature are more satisfying embodiments of life than nature ever gave. But for those who are denied participation in its leisure, whose loss in industry is not returned in art, civilization has been a loss almost unrelieved. It is to the opportunities of leisure as provided by a shorter working day, and above all to those afforded by Sunday, in which there is not merely leisure but strength and daylight and the morning hours, that civilized man must look for compensation. Sunday is the people's university, the day of liberal education, devoted to universal interests. It is the day for cultivating those things that belong to us not as industrial implements but as men.

I will return to the hills whence is my strength. Sunday is renewal, a rejoining of the primal sources of our life. In the island of Capri they have a pretty custom, a survival such as one

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finds in all South Italy of the Greek processional religion, in accordance with which the Madonna goes every spring for a week to revisit her former home down by the seashore where the church used to stand. There is an important symbolism in this old ceremony, and one in harmony with our present theme. Sunday is the day for revisiting the ancient shrines, for going back to the fountains of our strength, back in our racial past, for excursions to our ancient abode by stream and wood and seashore, for the revival of the joy of war, of the chase, and of intense membership as found in the great team games.

The true Sunday will be partly different for different men. Each to his natural habitat as Mother Nature calls. The artist condemned to office work will turn to his carving, the musician to his violin. The born teacher will spend his Sunday with the children—and all of us, I hope, are teachers to some extent. The Nimrod will to the woods, the poet to the hills, the soldier to some athletic contest. That which he should have been, and is not in his daily work, each man will diligently seek on the day given him for this very purpose, that he should keep his soul alive.

The forbidding of such pious pilgrimage on that one day of the week consecrated by nature, and by the wiser portions of our law, to the end that such pilgrimage may be made, is not truly a Sunday law, but a law to the effect that Sunday shall not exist.

Even those whose good fortune has placed them among the expressive trades, the lawyer, the doctor, the business man, require some avocation to keep them fully human and alive. To the clerk, the factory hand, whose weekday life is within the covers of a ledger or in the making of a simple muscular contraction—to these Sunday is their one chance of life, their day of standing erect, of resuming the form and stature of a man.

Sunday is the day of the lost talents, of unfulfilled possibilities, the day for keeping alive some little fragment of the original gift that nature made. And this one day our Sunday laws take from us, or at least greatly impair.

For the young the need of Sunday is especially vital, the loss of it especially severe. The master instincts of our lives are not all equally present at all periods. Youth is the reign of some of those whose fulfillment cannot be packed into the narrow confines of a sedentary or meaningless occupation. Our industrial world differs most markedly from that of which nature is still dreaming in every

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growing boy and girl. The young man is still in his heart a viking, a soldier, a mighty hunter before the Lord. His soul is not fulfilled by adding figures or watching a machine.

And to the young especially the matter is one of life and death. Obedience to the great expressive instincts is during infancy, even up to the full age of twenty-one, a matter not merely of preserving life but of attaining it. With young people the question is not of survival merely but of whether they shall ever live at all. To our boys and girls from fourteen to twenty-one years old, of whom a large and increasing proportion of our factory population now consists, our Sunday laws are the denial of life, the permanent dwarfing, through starvation, of the growing soul.

The whole purpose of Sunday is a chance to grow and live. It is the one day consecrated and set aside, by nature and by man, to such fulfillment of our humanity as the necessities of our week-day labor cannot afford. When, on the top of long hours of sterilizing work, we impose this Sunday law to rob the mature worker and the growing youth of this one day in which nature might have had her part in them, to make them strong and beautiful and happy, we have sinned against nature and the spirit of Sunday, the brightest and happiest of our institutions.

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THEIR FUNCTION AND PROPER REGULATION*

JOHN COLLIER

National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures, New York City

I will say a few words about the facts of motion pictures, the problem, and the neglected opportunity. The subject pertains to all who are interested in playgrounds or in the child. The desire of the playground movement is that children shall have life in greater abundance; and the motion picture is a movement toward the enjoyment of larger life among the people. Motion pictures are the favorite entertainment to-day of the wage-earning classes of the world. They are the predominant form of theatre in America, both numerically and in point of moral influence. The daily motion

* Address, Fourth Annual Congress of the Playground Association of America, Rochester, N. Y., June 8, 1910.

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picture audience in this country is, at the minimum, two and one-half millions; the daily audience of all other theatres combined is, at the maximum, seven hundred and fifty thousand. The audience of the regular theatre is composed of the leisure class, the man out for a good time away from his family, the sophisticated element of the community. The audience of a motion picture show is the immigrant, the wage-earner, and the child, the formative and impressionable elements of our people. The motion picture audience is in the main a family audience.

This audience includes three or four hundred thousand children to-day. The motion picture receives delicately and rapidly the impression of the popular taste, popular interest, popular ideals, and, likewise, the intellectual limitation of the American public; and to any one interested in the psychological nature of our people on the artistic and moral side, I can recommend no better place to go than to the motion picture show. The public has made it what it is. Apart from wearing apparel, the illustrated magazine, and a church ceremonial, the motion picture is the leading artistic expression of the American masses. It is the only form of deliberate and conscious art in which the American wage-earning public participates.

There are many problems in the motion picture show. I will discuss them serially and will begin with the least difficult. There is the health problem, the problem of pure air, which can be obtained only by forced ventilation; the problem of eye-strain, which is largely unnecessary, and can be obviated by various means which I cannot go into here; the problem of over-stimulation along nervous lines, which becomes important wherever the pictures are predominantly sensational and, in fact, wherever they are not accompanied by the right kind of music and given in the proper environment. This health problem is obviously local in nature and can be handled only by each neighborhood or city and the mere statistics of the number affected by this problem show that it is important.

There is a police problem of the motion picture show. I do not now refer to the moral problem of the motion picture, but to the dangers which necessarily crowd into any place of public gathering, unless it is carefully safeguarded. Do not blame motion pictures if a rough crowd gathers outside a picture show. Do not blame motion pictures if children are taught to pick pockets by rogues who seek them out in irresponsible picture houses. Blame the local

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police; blame the laws which make it legal to admit young children unaccompanied to any place of public entertainment. This seems an obvious piece of caution to advise, but it is a fact that the art of motion pictures is being continually attacked and called pernicious because of some purely local evil which has fastened upon the place where the picture is shown. Motion pictures deserve and indeed cry aloud to be protected from the parasites of local evils which crowd upon the places where pictures are exhibited. I am perfectly aware that the charges of immorality and disorder against motion picture shows have been exaggerated, but the subject is bound to be loudly agitated until a high degree of public order is maintained by the shows. It ought to be agitated because so many children and families attend the shows. The shows depend for their existence on the families and, secondarily, on the child and by whatever means they should be made worthy of their public.

Not only health and police problems, but problems of safety from fire and many other casual conditions confront the investigator of motion picture shows. I cannot go into more detail here, but urge that local investigations be undertaken without prejudice, and with a recognition of the predominant good and necessary permanence of motion picture shows, which therefore must be constructively regulated. The Board of Censorship in New York can give much information about conditions throughout the country and about methods for improving the picture houses in these respects which are local and can be handled, at the last analysis, only by local initiative.

Now, in this short time, a word about the motion picture itself: Motion picture is characteristically a form of the drama. The drama is of all forms of art the most potent form. The art of drama incorporates all forms of art. Drama deals with action, with problems, with moral problems, and it inevitably results in the formulation of ethical standards. Drama has a powerfully suggestive tendency, and this is particularly true of the motion picture drama, both because of its vividness and because it is a form of drama which reaches the impressionable elements of our public.

How can we contribute to the improvement of this form of art? We face a difficult problem here and when we undertake to become censors of the motion picture drama we undertake to do what many

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communities have tried and failed to do—to coerce into a particular line of moral development that which is essentially an art.

First of all, the motion picture must be viewed as a national product. Everything about the picture show, except the picture, is a local product. But a single motion picture original is made and copies are struck off from this identical one with another for the whole country, or for the international market. For instance: we are going to see Browning's "Pippa Passes" in motion pictures



Biograph Company.

A SCENE FROM PIPPA PASSES.

to-night. "Pippa Passes" was produced simultaneously in all the cities of America and afterward in Central America, many European centers and, indeed, on all continents. To really affect the development of motion pictures, one must get back to the original and must influence that. Such is the important distinction between the numerous local censorships of motion pictures throughout this country and the National Board of Censorship, of which it happens that I am a member. The local censorships censor those copies of a picture which come to that locality. They cannot constructively change the picture; they can only mutilate or destroy it. The National Board of Censorship censors originals and cannot only destroy, but can change and can suggest alternative methods of producing a given effect. Moreover, if a motion picture is censored

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in one locality and all the copies are confiscated, it is ever possible for the exhibitor to obtain an uncensored copy from the nearest neighboring city and, unless he is caught in the act of showing the picture, nothing can be done to hinder him. This is the insurmountable limitation about a local censorship of motion pictures. A federal law would overcome this limitation; or the limitation could be overcome if every city adopted a uniform standard of censorship, which they would never, never do; or this limitation can be overcome, as it is actually being overcome, by such a co-operative arrangement as the National Board of Censorship. A word about this National Board of Censorship.

The National Board of Censorship has existed one year. It was formed at the request of the exhibitors of motion pictures in New York City, and it was soon made national at the request of the manufacturers of motion pictures, who supply the national market. It operates through agreements with the manufacturers, whereby all pictures are seen before they are put on the market, and a picture is suppressed, or approved, or changed, for the whole American market. The Board of Censorship is controlled by social and civic bodies in New York City, among which are The Ethical-Social League, The Charity Organization Society, The People's Institute, The Woman's Municipal League, and The Public Educational Association. It is administered through the People's Institute and its address is No. 318 East 15th Street, New York City. I urge you to write for detailed information to this address, as the subject of censorship is a complicated one and I can only touch on it superficially here. The censoring is done by a committee of volunteers. About thirty-five feet of film (originals or samples) are censored weekly by the various sections of the censoring committee. The work is financed through the People's Institute by contributions from all sources, including those who have commercial interests in motion pictures. But the National Board of Censorship has no direct relation with any source of support; in fact, the decisive work is, as I have said, done by volunteers, and the mere technical and clerical aspects are handled by the secretaries. All pictures placed on the American market for the past ten months have been passed favorably by the National Board of Censorship, with the exception of certain so-called "specials," mainly prize-fight pictures which have been produced by special syndicates and do not come under the agree-

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ments of the censorship. In general, to mention the negative sides of its work, the Board of Censorship withholds its approval from pictures of wanton sensationalism, of peculiarly dangerous suggestiveness, of victorious criminality, of idle cruelty, and, of course, from anything of an obscene tendency. Clearly and emphatically, the Censorship Board does not condemn all pictures that deal with law-breaking or crime. Here comes in the most widely controverted aspect of the motion picture problem. I have said that motion pictures are a form of drama, and that the drama deals with problems, and, in its most worth-while aspect, with moral problems. It deals with real life, with social life, and, in the nature of the case, it deals with some themes and situations which are not generally considered safe for the child mind. The Board of Censorship has recognized this danger which may inhere, even in a constructive and veracious and ethical treatment of problems of real life, when the child in the audience is taken into consideration. But the child is only one-fourth or one-fifth of the total audience, and it is an open question whether even the child gets from the seriously intended moral-problem motion picture the distorted and suggestive impression that many reformers have argued that he gets. The child is an assimilative organism and, according to the instincts of his nature, at a given time, he hungrily absorbs or instinctively rejects the mental food that is offered him. Personally, I am inclined to think that adults are more in danger in the presence of moral-problem motion pictures than are children, simply because many adults are ethically still mere children, but through social intercourse they have been rendered sensitive, and morbidly sensitive, to many aspects of life which have not yet impressed the consciousness of the child. But these philosophical or sociological considerations have not been the determining considerations of the National Board of Censorship. They have faced primarily the fact that motion pictures are a form of drama and therefore must deal with action, with conduct, and with law-breaking, at least in an idealized form, however swift the ideal justice that always overtakes the law-breaker in motion pictures. To forbid motion pictures this freedom, would be to sign the death warrant of the most vital and creative element of the picture art—the dramatic element. It would be impossible to enforce such a standard, for the whole motion picture industry and the whole motion

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picture audience would vigorously rebel, and none of the censorships, national or local, has attempted to eliminate all pictures that are called "crime pictures." To end with one point which I hope will be suggestive, it is not merely motion picture standards that are in process of being formulated in America. The basic, ethical standards of the populace itself are being formulated, and, as always in the life of the world, it is the populace itself which is formulating its own standards. Long ago the Greek critic Aristotle, justified the drama because, as he said, it was a form of vicarious experience whereby the individual and society were able to pose their problems in an ideal way, and to get a moral reaction without putting to stake the practical concerns of life. This profound observation of Aristotle holds good unquestionably for the motion picture drama to-day. The public is formulating its moral standards through this democratic drama, just as the public is realizing its heroic instincts, its romantic cravings through the motion picture theatre. We are dealing, in other words, with a profound and central, sociological process, in attempting to censor the motion pictures of America.

I wish to impress upon the social workers gathered here the work which the motion picture theatre has already done toward the uplift of popular amusements, not merely through being itself superior to other forms of cheap, indoor recreation, but through constructively competing with many forms of cheap amusement which are acknowledged to be inferior. This is seen in the virtual disappearance of the malicious penny arcade before the competition of the motion picture. It is equally seen in the great inroads that motion pictures have made on the cheap burlesque and vaudeville of the country. The dance halls have suffered and I have at hand a testimonial from the chief theatre inspector of Chicago, that the saloon has definitely and confessedly suffered from the competition of the moving picture show. Moreover, while the motion picture show retains many evils that have characterized the forms of amusement it has replaced, it must be recognized that the moving picture show has merely segregated these evils in a place where they can be effectively attacked and where they can be attacked with the active co-operation of the great majority in the audience, for this majority is made up of families and of really conscientious people of the wage-earning classes.

I am emphasizing the good that there is in motion pictures

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because I am convinced that only a sympathetic attitude can lead to results in dealing with this problem. I have pointed out that there are many problems beside the picture problem and that they must be handled by local initiative. The picture problem itself must, in the main, be handled by local initiative. This is not so true on the repressive side as it is on the constructive side. Be it remembered that there is an immense repertory of motion pictures, covering the literature, geography, and a good deal of the natural sciences of the world, and that the exhibitor can draw on this vast repertory for his program. He is open to suggestion; he merely wants to know what it is that the public wants. He can be helped to find out. His show is a neighborhood institution and as such it should be dealt with, and as a neighborhood force of great actual importance and of immense possibilities for further good.

Very briefly regarding motion pictures in the schools and on the playgrounds. Motion pictures are an adjunct of teaching along a great many lines, including biology, history, geography, literature, social science; on the playground they will serve both an educational and a recreational function. We all recognize that, after all, the great, overwhelming issue before those interested in playgrounds is not more playgrounds merely, but a general enlarging of the wholesome life of the child and the family. A great need of the playground, moreover, is to attract the whole family there, not merely the child; most of all, to attract the father of the child. The motion picture appeals to the whole family; in this way it will multiply the uses to which playgrounds can be put, and will strengthen the hold of the playgrounds upon the child by extending that hold over the entire family.

The playground system in any city will be built around the man at the head of it. Get your man and the rest will be added to you.

JOSEPH LEE



Biograph Company.

RAMONA LEARNS THAT SHE HERSELF HAS INDIAN BLOOD

RAMONA

Ramona, the novel by Helen Hunt Jackson, showing the white man's injustice to the Indian, has been made more real to many readers through the motion pictures illustrating the story. The identical buildings in which Mrs. Jackson placed her characters were found, photographed and reproduced in the motion pictures.



Biograph Company.

THE DEVASTATION OF ALESSANDRO'S VILLAGE
BY THE WHITES

THE DANCE PROBLEM*

MRS. CHARLES HENRY ISRAELS

Chairman of the Committee on Amusements and Vacation Resources of
Working Girls, New York City

The cry has gone up from one end of the country to the other that the girls go into the dance halls. It has come from settlements, churches, girls' clubs, friendly societies, schools, from every kind of organized activity that attempts to ameliorate the conditions of the working people. We ask ourselves, what shall we do about it. The first reaction is, we must get rid of the dance halls, and repress the desire to go to them. The constructive possibilities of this wonderful amusement resource do not seem to be the paramount issue on the first approach to the problem; but the dance hall as such is full of enormous constructive possibilities; and it is that phase of the dance problem that I want to bring to you, especially as you can carry the message to every part of the country and can relate it to the work which you yourself are trying to do.

The problem of the older girl between fourteen and twenty,—and the dance problem is the problem of ~~the~~ girl,—is how to bring her into healthy and wholesome relationship with the things which Nature desires her to seek out at that particular age. She is developing from the little girl into the woman, is passing through the most difficult stage of her life. Our American working girls have unfortunately no one to study their problem and their situation with relation to the adolescent period. Most of the people who are in direct relation to them would not know the meaning of the word, and the girl would scarcely understand her being discussed as an adolescent. The fact remains that she has to come into and pass through the same fears and fancies that affect the life of every girl in the world. For the most part she is without home ties because the home offers her no tie that is adequate. She has no opportunity in the home relationships for helping her form her acquaintances and friendships, and for following out that most natural and innocent desire at that time of her life, seeking the companionship of young men, and pleasure and happiness after the day's toil,

* Address Fourth Annual Congress of the Playground Association of America, Rochester, N. Y., June 9, 1910.

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Photo by L. W. Hine

A LOW DANCE HALL IN NEW YORK CITY



Photo by L. W. Hine

DANCING UNDER WHOLESOME INFLUENCES AT A CHICAGO
RECREATION CENTER

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and finding the man who is to be the mate, and later on the husband and father. She has every right to seek out these things. It has been impressed upon us through generations of religious and educational teaching that such desires and thoughts are unwomanly on the part of the young girl, that she must repress, must put aside, must keep away from herself all thought of seeking out her natural and right human relationships. We have adopted the attitude of unwholesome hypocrisy to the whole subject. We have told ourselves in our churches, and settlements, and schools, that we are afraid of the responsibility if we allow young people the opportunity to meet one another and if we encourage their being together in social relationships. We are afraid friendship between them may spring up. *We* are afraid; but our friend, who runs the saloon, is not afraid of any such consequence. On the contrary he realizes that in this very desire of the young people to meet with one another is a splendid opportunity for him to increase his profits. He has realized that if he can attract these same young girls into his saloon by offering them a dance he can increase his business probably a hundred per cent. So he fits up a back room of his saloon, or enlarges his building, and hangs out a sign, "Dancing."

Every healthy and normal girl of fourteen in the neighborhood believes that on the first Saturday night when she receives her first week's wages she is a free and independent being, and she is going down to the dance hall to have a good time. She goes. The saloon keeper who runs the dance hall has made it a rule that the dance is used distinctly as a bait to draw customers for drinking, and orders the musicians to play three minutes for dancing, and then stop fifteen minutes for intermission. During intermission if the dancers do not sit at the tables and drink they must leave. They must encourage other people to drink. Sometimes he goes even further, and offers vaudeville, insisting that the performers shall step down from the stage and circulate among the customers and further encourage drinking. Now, this is not a temperance lecture. I simply want to put squarely before you the probable results of spending a whole evening dancing with someone whom you may or may not have seen before, whose price for the entertainment he offers you is that you shall sit at the table and drink with

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him, that you shall be in his embraces while you dance, and that you shall allow him to accompany you home, and who always says that unless you drink you need not come any more,—if you cannot be like the other girls he doesn't want you there. There is the warm room, the excitement, the dancing, and the added fun of drinking,—think of the relation between this and what the probable future life of the girl is going to be. The saloon keeper goes even further. Frequently he provides the opportunity for another process,—it is a rare instance where the saloon and the dance hall are not directly connected, either in the same building or in another near by, with a hotel with accommodations for the young people who come to the dance hall. It is not a question of the organized traffic in women; it is not a question of the problem of having these girls go into lives of shame, as we generally understand the term,—that is another phase of the problem. The largest percentage of these girls are not drawn into any such organized trade, but they are distinctly led into loose lives, into giving up the bloom of their girlhood in the sacrifice to a good time. They are found going about with one or two or three boys who are seeking also nothing but a good time, and believe they are having it. They are giving all this for the price of going to the dance hall and an occasional gift of the pretty things girls love and cannot always get for themselves from their slender wages.

We have found that the dance problem is the same from Maine to California. The difference is only that in some cities it is more highly commercialized than in others. The dance hall I have described to you exists in every city large and small in this United States. There may be one, two, or a dozen (I venture to say you won't believe it) right around the corners here in Rochester. Of course you don't have the problem we have in New York, for there we have the dancing academies which are peculiar to that city. These are places which advertise to teach dancing, and hold receptions on three nights each week and on Sunday afternoons have a concert. These places do make a pretence of giving young people some exchange for their money in instruction. As found in cities outside New York they still maintain the air of respectability which they had in New York fifteen years ago. This whole problem is the development of the last ten years. As it was in New York, and very

SUBSTITUTES FOR THE LOW DANCE HALLS



Photo by L. W. Hine

FOREIGN BORN CITIZENS MEMBERS OF A GLEE CLUB IN A CHICAGO RECREATION CENTER



Photo by L. W. Hine

AMATEUR THEATRICALS IN A CHICAGO RECREATION CENTER

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likely is in most smaller cities now, the dancing academy is a resort for people of the middle classes who find social opportunities for their boys and girls in these public places where lessons are given and where girls meet young men on a basis of social respectability that appears to the mothers and fathers as the right kind of opportunity for them to have. There the relationships of the family are kept up, and there is no cause for complaint. In New York the dancing academies are only so in name. The man at the head is not an instructor of dancing, he is simply a business manager. To assist him he has a corps of young men whose duty it is to bring young girls there and teach them to dance and see that they have a good time, and whose only means of livelihood is apparently the financial result of a benefit given once or twice a year. The statement has been clearly made by the National Commission of Immigration, and also by the State Commission, that these public dancing academies are distinctly used as recruiting grounds for the men who exploit women. This is the easiest and simplest opportunity for meeting young girls—far better and simpler than the moving picture show because the girl is in attendance a longer time and is there for the purpose of making friends.

The dance hall as it is has no good features to recommend it—yet think of the constructive possibilities in it. We have been so blind and so afraid of ourselves and so afraid to trust the natural instincts of healthy young people that we have turned them out into the highways and byways of this form of commercialized amusement. The average attendance at the dancing academies of New York in a week is one hundred thousand young people, ninety per cent of whom are under twenty-one years of age and forty-five per cent under sixteen. That means that the entire population which arrives at the adolescent age has sufficient provision in the dance academies in New York City. Nearly every girl who comes to the working age goes to these places. A very small percentage of these girls knows anything about a settlement, or a church organization, and if they did know they would not go there because there they are not offered the kind of amusement resources they are seeking. Society is spelled to these girls in terms of the dance hall. They find in it their only social opportunity. The natural reaction of young people who are healthy and normal is not towards indecent

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and wrong things. That is where the constructive possibility of the whole question comes in.

The problem is involved especially with the question of summer amusement resources, that time of year when everybody is in the street, when everybody seeks outdoor amusement, when the working girl has a slack season and must spend some weeks in enforced idleness, or in some cases has a real vacation given her. Thousands of young girls around the city have no place to go, and so drift into one amusement resort after another. It was these young girls drifting about that directed my attention to the problem. We have only just arrived at the place where the physician arrived many years ago—where we seek out the cause and try to remove it. We all know what female delinquency is. The people who labor hardest at helping girls who have become delinquent are the very people who should seek out the causes of that delinquency. The causes lie in these ungoverned, unlicensed, unregulated amusement resorts. The field is so broad for social opportunities, and so quickly seized upon by young people to whom they are offered that the country should be covered from one end to the other if the right kind of opportunity for these boys and girls is to be given them. Repression is not the remedy. It is one thing to realize a thing, and another to meet it face to face. To meet the needs of the unorganized, helpless, homeless girls in the summer we have organized a vacation bureau which offers them through the newspapers, through bulletins in their shops and factories, through every means we can get for reaching them, vacations outside the city at nominal cost. We found places where they may get country board, cheap, wholesome, clean. We are met with the question, "If I go to this place may I have my gentleman friend go too?" We answer that this depends upon whether there are accommodations. We advise another place in the neighborhood, but we do not restrict them by hours or rules or in their relations with young men. We simply say, "Here is a list of good places. If you go to any one you are likely to have a good time. It is for you to behave yourself as becomes a lady."

Then, we have sought out that most natural avenue for constructive effort, the law. We inquired first what already existing ordinances could be made to apply to the dance places. We found in New York City that we had only one possible way, which was that in building laws there were certain things that would permit

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us to close some of these places. We framed a bill to license and regulate all dance places. It has been passed by a close vote in the Legislature and has become a law. The special point of the law is its license of the premises upon which dancing goes on, and not the man who operates the dance places. That is the defect in the existing excise laws. By licensing the premises we demand that they shall be at all times conducted in an orderly and decent manner, that they have the same standards always, and that the building and fire laws be complied with. That means a great many places will have to go out of business. Two dangerous fires in dancing academies have demonstrated the wisdom of such an act. We further stipulate that liquor cannot be sold, or served, or given away in the room in which dancing is taught, or in any room on the same floor connected with it. That removes the visible temptation of seeing other people drinking. We provided that the presence of girls under sixteen unaccompanied by adults, that improper dancing, and disorderly conduct will make the license subject to revocation. If a license is revoked twice it cannot be renewed within a year. All complaints against the place are made a matter of public record, so that anybody may inspect the records of the license department. That gives the opportunity to regulate.

We have also gone several steps further. We have persuaded the public schools to allow dancing in the evening recreation centers, and we have plans for organizing a number of successful dancing classes in the immediate vicinity of some of the worst dancing academies. We have already two model dance halls in operation. It is not known to the young people who attend them that they are anything but money-making establishments. They are run in direct business competition with others in the neighborhood. Five hundred have had instruction in dancing at one of our model academies, and not one of those young people suspects that he is going to a place that has even the shadow of philanthropy over it. It is run by a first-class dancing master. Anybody who enters as a pupil must do so with the distinct understanding that he must dance in an orderly manner and behave in a proper way. We are opening a second one that is to meet the problem of the dance hall as such, and to show what a real social institution the dance hall may become. This is modeled after the Pavilion in San Francisco, which is ideal as a commercial enterprise and has been in operation for a number of years. We are offering three dances

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for five cents. The floor is cleared after the third dance. We have a corps of introducers. The rule is that a young man may not dance with a girl until he has been introduced. We get his name by a system of registration when he comes in. We issue a certain number of invitations. He is complimented by receiving one. When the young man comes he is given a card with his name on it which is good for thirty admissions. It costs him nothing. The girls do not pay. The money is made on the three dances for five cents. They come in free. The introducer will ask the young woman if he may introduce the young man. It is done, and they dance. His address is verified by sending a post card notice. If it is returned to us we know he has given a wrong address, and then he is refused admission again. The girls who come too frequently are notified, and their parents are notified that they are coming to the dance hall every night in the week. Or if the girl ceases coming we notify the parents that she is not at our dance hall now and they should see where she is, that we have no further responsibility. We have parents' nights once a month, when a special program is provided. We have gone in for confetti showers, prize waltzes and various kinds of wholesome vaudeville features. We expect to go into every type of novelty that will compete with the man next door. We must rely upon the excellence of our floor and music in order to get the young people to come to us.

We are to have a dance hall at Rockaway Beach this summer, which will be moved to the lower east side next fall.

In the mean time we ask the city, where the responsibility rests after all, to introduce just such dance halls, to adopt publicly into the life of the city such features of these places as they legitimately can. As the first practical experiment we are asking the use of one of the recreation piers of the city. We plan to organize a committee from the neighborhood who will act as introducers and supervise the dancing, and to put in charge a man of character who is the best dancing master in New York, with the best assistants we can find, a man accustomed to handling five hundred to a thousand couples at once. It will be open every night in the week, with a concert program on Sunday. This is the beginning of the municipal dance hall idea. In Philadelphia, when I suggested the idea, the mayor stated publicly that the new playgrounds being fitted up in Philadelphia should each be equipped with a municipal dance

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platform. Thus the first constructive work of the Philadelphia Recreation Committee will be the organizing and equipping of such a dance hall.

This is my special message to the Playground Congress. The responsibility rests upon the community itself. There should be provision for the recreation of the older boys and girls, just as you have provided recreation for the little children. In the social dance there is a larger opportunity for proper enjoyment and for obtaining good results than there ever could be in the folk dance. You have the natural resource which everybody seeks. There is no easier avenue of approach to young people than through the thing they want. If you give them that you have the opportunity to lead them to the other things you want for them. There is no city large or small but can utilize the desire for play by giving something better to the older boys and girls in its parks than benches. Every keeper of amusement parks or picnic grounds has learned that ages ago. He knows he must give them a chance to dance. If he appeals to the girls he knows he will get the boys. The girls do not spend the money, but they draw the boys who do. If you in your playgrounds and social centers bring to the young people the thing they want, you will get a hold on them, and through them on their fathers and mothers. I know of no more inspiring sight than that I saw in Chicago where the young people gave an exhibition of their year's work, with their fathers and mothers and relatives in attendance, and winding up with a dance. In Chicago, however, until recently, they have failed to use their field houses to the fullest extent. Only certain organizations were allowed to use them for dancing, and they closed at twenty minutes to eleven—plenty of time to go afterwards to the dance halls of the neighborhood. There is in some, now at least, one evening given up to public dancing, where anyone who wants to dance may go in. We have been afraid, have been cowards, have been hypocrites. It is for us to provide the wholesome recreation, and not to leave it to the other people to provide in full measure the unwholesome opportunity for it.

PERCENTAGE OF WORKING GIRLS GOING TO DANCE HALLS

MRS. CHARLES HENRY ISRAELS,

New York City.

Investigations have shown that ninety-five per cent. of New York working girls go to the dance halls. A young woman was sent into the dance places. She went about as one of the girls, danced with the boys, went into the dressing rooms with the girls, danced with men who were none too careful of her, talked with girls whom she would not care to associate with, so that our information is absolutely first hand. She visited over three hundred dance halls. There are three hundred and thirty in two boroughs alone, and over two hundred dancing academies in three boroughs,—altogether nearly seven hundred in New York City.

The relatively smaller American cities, such as Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Louisville, St. Louis, and Detroit, have dance hall problems similar to those in New York.

It has always seemed to me that it is just as necessary to furnish recreation centers and playgrounds as school houses, because the physical development of the children goes hand in hand with their mental development.

FRANK K. MOTT,
Mayor, Oakland, Cal.

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